

THURSDAY
20 OCTOBER

P4

**Maths Puzzle,
Word Ladder and
Word Wheel**
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Clockwise from right: a woman gestures with a crucifix; a resident confronts riot police; police in a cherry-picker speak to a protester on a barricade; a protester is carried away by officers AP, AFP/GETTY



EVICTON

Police under fire for use of Tasers as they battled to clear Dale Farm

By Kevin Rawlinson

Police were facing criticism last night over their "heavy-handed" approach to clearing barricades at Britain's largest illegal Travellers' site.

Clashes between police and protesters continued at Dale Farm last night after a morning of violent confrontations in which two people were shot with Tasers.

The law reform group Justice expressed "concern" at the use of the weapons. Police defended the use of Tasers during the clearances, saying officers had been threatened with "serious violence".

Police claimed last night to have secured the area and removed protesters from a 40ft high scaffolding tower which had been erected at the main gate to the site. A total of 23 arrests were made throughout the day.

"We are in control of the whole site. It is calm. The tension is now reduced," said Superintendent Trevor Roe, of Essex Police.

In the morning, a fence was broken at the rear of the site after police reportedly received intelligence that "missiles, fluids" and other weapons were being "stockpiled".

They were pelted with objects thrown by protesters, who also built barricades which they set on fire. An unoccupied caravan was set alight and explosions were heard as it burnt. No one was hurt.

Supt Roe said the two officers who deployed Tasers had been trying "to



Police and bailiffs surround a barricade during the eviction JOHN MCLELLAN

Tasers: when they should be used

Tasers divide opinion. Human rights groups claim they are "potentially lethal", and responsible for hundreds of deaths in the US. But the Association of Chief Police Officers says they have a significant deterrent effect, and in 2008, 10,000 were issued to police.

Tasers fire two electric bars up to 35 feet and deliver a disabling 50,000-volt shock. The police remain sensitive to public doubts about the Taser, and the Independent Police Complaints Commission recently introduced rules making officers forward all

complaints about Tasers to the police watchdog.

A US police expert, Lieutenant Todd Faulkner, said earlier this year that the Taser should never be deployed during "a dynamic, deadly force situation". It was just such a situation in which the fugitive Raoul Moat was shot with a Taser by Northumbria Police.

Last year, the manufacturer, Taser International, warned against firing the weapons at anyone's chest area because of "the controversy about whether or not they might cause harm."

{i} Some protesters threw bricks at officers, who responded with batons. Others set the barricades alight as bailiffs focused on removing protesters from the front gate one by one and dismantling it.

protect themselves". He said: "They carry personal protective equipment which includes the Taser and they just naturally reacted as they are trained individuals to operate that device."

Acknowledging that Tasers are not recommended as a "public order tactic," he added: "This was an isolated incident where officers were threatened directly."

He said police had entered the site in response to the risk of violence as Basildon Council sought to begin the clearance.

Residents and protesters accused them of being heavy-handed. "I have been through a lot of evictions but I have never seen anything like this. To see riot police on our doorsteps is shocking. We are terrified of the police," said Kathleen McCarthy, who lived at Dale Farm.

The clearances mark the climax of a 10-year legal battle between the council and the community. The residents won a last-minute injunction as bailiffs amassed at the gates, but earlier this week a High Court judge ruled that the clearances could go ahead.

Eyewitness

Caught in a war zone and with nowhere to go

Kevin Rawlinson



The stretch of greenbelt land at Dale Farm has been a figurative battleground for years but yesterday looked like a war zone. Burning barricades were erected and police clashed with protesters. A caravan was burned to the ground and missiles were thrown at riot officers by masked protesters.

Caught in the middle is a community with no idea where it is to go. A protester yesterday sat on the floor with a sign which read: "Judge's ruling or law can make the eviction just."

Cornelius Sheridan, a terminal cancer patient lives on one of the five plots spared from eviction but that doesn't mean he has been spared from the anguish. He was taken out of his home as bailiffs began to enter. Power to the site was cut, making his defibrillator useless. Two days earlier he had been hospitalised with a severe asthma attack but came back because he was afraid of what would happen to his legal plot.

It is estimated the cost of evicting the residents of Dale Farm will reach up to £18m in police and council costs.